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eventually could lead to Cuban
is from Angola.

would give no specific figures on
military presence in Africa. U.S.
put the current force in Ethiopia
5,000, down from a peak of
it is estimated that there are
Cuban combat soldiers in Angola.
the early 1970s, Castro regularly
ed visits to Cuba of U.S. congress-
other officials and journalists as a
means of sending messages to Washington
across the wide political breach separating
the two countries. Such contacts have less-
ened, both in frequency and impact, under
the Reagan administration, which consis-
tently has blamed Cuba as the "source" of
conflict in Central America. In its early days
the administration contemplated imposing
measures ranging from a naval quarantine
to a direct military action against the island.

But since the immigration agreement
was concluded Dec. 14, Castro has played
host to a delegation of U.S. Catholic bishops
and has been visited by three U.S. Con-
gressmen accompanied by several scientists
and businessmen.

The congressional delegation, including
Reps. Mickey Leland (D-Texas) and Jim
Leach (R-Iowa) and headed by Rep. Bill Al-
exander (D-Ark.), carried Castro's message
to Washington. Alexander later said that in
a meeting the day after their return Jan. 17
he told Defense Secretary Caspar W. Wein-
berger that "Castro wants to normalize re-
lations with the United States, period."

"He's waiting for someone to talk to. He's
standing there like a bridesmaid," said Al-
exander, who is chief deputy majority whip
in the House and a vocal critic of the Rea-
gan administration's policies in Central
America.

After questioning whether Castro can be
trusted, Weinberger "promised to bring it
up with the president and with [Secretary of
State George P.] Shultz," Alexander said in
a telephone conversation in Washington.

At the end of the lengthy interview
Wednesday in his office in the Palace
of the Revolution, Castro emphasized

about it." According to the Cubans, the
United States provided a satisfactory an-
swer indicating the flight was unrelated to
the negotiations.

The Defense Department declined to re-
spond last week to a Washington Post in-
quiry about the incident, noting that as a
matter of policy it "does not comment on
reconnaissance flights."

In general, Castro said, the Reagan ad-
ministration had stepped up military maneu-
vers off its coast and at the U.S. naval base
at Guantanamo on the eastern tip of Cuba
and greatly increased aerial surveillance of
the island nation. Other Cuban officials said
that flights in international air space around
Cuba by the SR71 planes had increased
from eight during the Carter administration
to 120 during the first four years of the
Reagan presidency. Flights directly over
Cuba, they said, had decreased from five
during Carter's term to four since Reagan
became president.

In a list of what he called "hostile" acts by
the administration, Castro also included "in-
tensified economic measures, the economic
blockade," and the exertion of "great pres-
sure to obstruct the rescheduling of Cuba's
external debt" with the West.

"In the political field, it also has been very
aggressive," he said, "and in the military
field, it has constantly threatened us. All
that is true. But nevertheless, we are grate-
ful. I'm speaking seriously, we are very
grateful."

"Why? Because it forced us to undertake
two big revolutions." One, he said,
amounted to a rethinking of Cuba's econom-
ic structure that has resulted in an ongoing
austerity drive, an emphasis on import sub-
stitution, and the fulfillment of trade com-
mittments with the Soviet Bloc.

More importantly, Castro said, "during
the past four years, in view of the threat of
the United States, we have totally changed
our conceptions regarding defense. We
have multiplied our forces by many times,
to the point that we have become an uncon-
querable country. Invulnerable, unoccu-
piable."